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BALLOT.

BY

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B A L L O T.

IT is possible, and perhaps not very difficult, to invent a machine, by the aid of which electors may vote for a candidate, or for two or three candidates, out of a greater number, without its being discovered for whom they vote ; it is less easy than the rabid, and foaming Radical supposes ; but I have no doubt it may be accomplished. In Mr. Grote's dagger ballot box, which has been carried round the country by eminent patriots, you stab the card of your favourite candidate with a dagger. I have seen another, called the mouse-trap ballot box, in which you poke your finger into the trap of the member you prefer, and are caught and detained till the trap-clerk below (who knows by means of a wire when you are caught) marks your vote, pulls the liberator, and releases you. Which may be the most eligible of these two methods I do not pretend to determine, nor do I

think my excellent friend Mr. Babbage has as yet made up his mind on the subject ; but, by some means or another, I have no doubt the thing may be done.

Landed proprietors imagine they have a right to the votes of their tenants ; and instances, in every election, are numerous where tenants have been dismissed for voting contrary to the wishes of their landlords. In the same manner strong combinations are made against tradesmen who have chosen to think, and act for themselves in political matters, rather than yield their opinions to the solicitations of their customers. There is a great deal of tyranny and injustice in all this. I should no more think of asking what the political opinions of a shopkeeper were, than of asking whether he was tall or short, or large or small : for a difference of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. I would desert the most aristocratic butcher that ever existed, and deal with one who

“ Shook the arsenal, and fulmin'd over Greece.”

On the contrary, I would not adhere to the man who put me in uneasy habiliments, however great his veneration for trial by jury, or however ardent his

attachment to the liberty of the subject. A tenant I never had ; but I firmly believe that if he had gone through certain pecuniary formalities twice a year, I should have thought it a gross act of tyranny to have interfered either with his political, or his religious opinions.

All these practices are bad ; but the facts and the consequences are exaggerated.

In the first place, the plough is not a political machine : the loom and the steam-engine are furiously political, but the plough is not. Nineteen tenants out of twenty care nothing about their votes, and pull off their opinions as easily to their landlords as they do their hats. As far as the great majority of tenants are concerned, these histories of persecution are mere declamatory nonsense ; they have no more predilection for whom they vote than organ pipes have for what tunes they are to play. A tenant dismissed for a fair and just cause, often attributes his dismissal to political motives, and endeavours to make himself a martyr with the public : a man who ploughs badly, or who pays badly, says he is dismissed for his

vote. No candidate is willing to allow that he has lost his election by his demerits ; and he seizes hold of these stories, and circulates them with the greatest avidity : they are stated in the House of Commons ; John Russell and Spring Rice fall a crying ; there is lamentation of Liberals in the land ; and many groans for the territorial tyrants.

A standing reason against the frequency of dismissal of tenants is, that it is always injurious to the pecuniary interests of a landlord to dismiss a tenant ; the property always suffers in some degree by a going off tenant ; and it is therefore always the interest of a landlord not to change when the tenant does his duty as an agriculturist.

To part with tenants for political reasons always makes a landlord unpopular. The Constitutional, price $4d.$; the Cato, at $3\frac{1}{2}d.$; and the Lucius Junius Brutus, at $2d.$, all set upon the unhappy scutiger ; and the squire, unused to be pointed at, and thinking that all Europe and part of Asia are thinking of him and his farmers, is driven to the brink of suicide, and despair. That such things are

done is not denied, that they are scandalous when they are done is equally true ; but these are reasons why such acts are less frequent than they are commonly represented to be. In the same manner, there are instances of shopkeepers being materially injured in their business from the votes they have given ; but the facts themselves, as well as the consequences, are grossly exaggerated. If shopkeepers lose Tory they gain Whig customers ; and it is not always the vote which does the mischief, but the low vulgar impertinence, and the unbridled scurrility of a man who thinks that by dividing to mankind their rations of butter and of cheese, he has qualified himself for legislation, and that he can hold the rod of empire because he has wielded the yard of mensuration. I detest all inquisition into political opinions, but I have very rarely seen a combination against any tradesman who modestly, quietly, and conscientiously took his own line in politics. But Brutus and buttermen, cheesemongers and Cato do not harmonise well together ; good taste is offended, the coxcomb loses his friends, and general disgust is mistaken for combined oppression. Shopkeepers, too,

are very apt to cry out before they are hurt ; a man who sees after an election one of his customers buying a pair of gloves on the opposite side of the way, roars out that his honesty will make him a bankrupt, and the county papers are filled with letters from Brutus, Publicola, Hampden, and Pym.

This interference with the freedom of voting, bad as it is, produces no political deliberation ; it does not make the Tories stronger than the Whigs, nor the Whigs than the Tories, for both are equally guilty of this species of tyranny ; and any particular system of measures fails or prevails, much as if no such practice existed. The practice had better not be at all, but if a certain quantity of the evil does exist, it is better that it should be equally divided among both parties, than that it should be exercised by one, for the depression of the other. There are politicians always at a white heat, who suppose that there are landed tyrants only on one side of the question ; but human life has been distressingly abridged by the flood, there is no time to spare, it is impossible to waste it upon such senseless bigotry.

If a man is sheltered from intimidation, is it at all clear that he would vote from any better motive than intimidation? If you make so tremendous an experiment, are you sure of attaining your object? The landlord has perhaps said a cross word to the tenant; the candidate for whom the tenant votes in opposition to his landlord has taken his second son for a footman, or his father knew the candidate's grandfather, how many thousand votes sheltered (as the ballotists suppose from intimidation) would be given from such silly motives as these? how many would be given from the mere discontent of inferiority? or from that strange simious schoolboy passion of giving pain to others, even when the author cannot be found out?— motives as pernicious as any which could proceed from intimidation. So that all voters screened by ballot would not be screened for any public good.

The Radicals (I do not use this word in any offensive sense, for I know many honest and excellent men of this way of thinking), but the Radicals praise and admit the lawful influence of wealth, and power. They are quite satisfied if a rich man of popular

manners gains the votes, and affections of his dependants ; but why is not this as bad as intimidation ? The real object is to vote for the good politician, not for the kind-hearted, or agreeable man : the mischief is just the same to the country whether I am smiled into a corrupt choice, or frowned into a corrupt choice,— what is it to me whether my landlord is the best of landlords, or the most agreeable of men ? I must vote for Joseph Hume, if I think Joseph more honest than the Marquis. The mere mitigated Radicals may pass over this, but the real carnivorous variety of these politicians should declaim as loudly against the fascinations as against the threats of the great. The man who possesses the land should never speak to the man who tills it. The intercourse between landlord and tenant should be as strictly guarded as that of the sexes in Turkey. A funded duenna should be placed over every landed grandee.— And then intimidation ! Is intimidation confined to the aristocracy ? Can any thing be more scandalous and atrocious than the intimidation of mobs ? did not the mob of Bristol occasion more ruin, wretchedness, death, and alarm than all the ejection of tenants, and combinations against shopkeepers, from the begin-

ning of the century? and did not the Scotch philosophers tear off the clothes of the Tories in Minto-shire? or at least such clothes as the customs of the country admit of being worn — and did not they, without any reflection at all upon the customs of the country, wash the Tory voters in the river?

Some sanguine advocates of the ballot contend that it would put an end to all canvassing: why should it do so? Under the ballot, I canvass (it is true) a person who may secretly deceive me. I cannot be sure he will not do so — but I am sure it is much less likely he will vote against me, when I have paid him all the deference and attention which a representative bestows on his constituents, than if I had totally neglected him: to any other objections he may have against me, at least I will not add that of personal incivility.

Scarcely is any great virtue practised without some sacrifice; and the admiration which virtue excites, seems to proceed from the contemplation of such sufferings, and of the exertions by which they are endured: a tradesman suffers some loss of trade by

voting for his country ; is he not to vote ? he might suffer some loss of blood in fighting for his country ; is he not to fight ? Every one would be a good Samaritan, if he was quite sure his compassion would cost him nothing. We should all be heroes, if it was not for blood and fractures ; all saints, if it were not for the restrictions, and privations of sanctity ; all patriots, if it were not for the losses and misrepresentations to which patriotism exposes us. The ballotists are a set of Englishmen glowing with the love of England and the love of virtue, but determined to hazard the most dangerous experiments in politics, rather than run the risk of losing a penny in defence of their exalted feelings.

An abominable tyranny exercised by the ballot is, that it compels those persons to conceal their votes, who hate all concealment, and who glory in the cause they support. If you are afraid to go in at the front door, and to say in a clear voice what you have to say, go in at the back door, and say it in a whisper — but this is not enough for you ; you make me, who am bold and honest, sneak in at the back door as well as yourself : because you are afraid of selling a

dozen or two of gloves less than usual ; you compel me, who have no gloves to sell, or who would dare and despise the loss, if I had ; to hide the best feelings of my heart, and to lower myself down to your mean morals. It is as if a few cowards, who could only fight behind walls and houses, were to prevent the whole regiment from showing a bold front in the field : what right has the coward to degrade me who am no coward, and put me in the same shameful predicament with himself ? If ballot is established, a zealous voter cannot do justice to his cause, there will be so many false Hampdens, and spurious Catos, that all men's actions, and motives will be mistrusted. It is in the power of any man to tell me that my colours are false, that I declaim with simulated warmth, and canvass with fallacious zeal ; that I am a Tory, though I call *Russell* for ever, or a Whig in spite of my obstreperous panegyrics of *Peel*. It is really a curious condition that all men must imitate the defects of a few, in order that it may not be known who have the natural imperfection, and who put it on from conformity. In this way in former days, to hide the grey hairs of the old, every body was forced to wear powder and pomatum.

But if all men are suspected; if things are so contrived that it is impossible to know what men really think, a serious impediment is created to the formation of good public opinion in the multitude. There is a town (No. 1.) in which live two very clever and respectable men, Johnson and Pelham, small tradesmen, men always willing to run some risk for the public good, and to be less rich, and more honest than their neighbours. It is of considerable consequence to the formation of opinion in this town, as an example, to know how Johnson and Pelham vote. It guides the affections, and directs the understandings, of the whole population, and materially affects public opinion in this town; and in another borough, No. 2., it would be of the highest importance to public opinion if it were certain how Mr. Smith, the ironmonger, and Mr. Rogers, the London carrier, voted; because they are both thoroughly honest men, and of excellent understanding for their condition of life. Now, the tendency of ballot would be to destroy all the Pelhams, Johnsons, Rogers', and Smiths, to sow a universal mistrust, and to exterminate the natural guides, and leaders of the people: political influence, founded

upon honour and ancient honesty in politics, could not grow up under such a system. No man's declaration could get believed. It would be easy to whisper away the character of the best men ; and to assert that, in spite of all his declarations, which are nothing but a blind, the romantic Rogers has voted on the other side, and is in secret league with our enemies.

“ Who brought that mischievous profligate villain into Parliament ? Let us see the names of his real supporters : who stood out against the strong and uplifted arm of power ? Who discovered this excellent and hitherto unknown person ? Who opposed the man whom we all know to be one of the first men in the country ? ” Are these fair and useful questions to be veiled hereafter in impenetrable mystery ? Is this sort of publicity of no good as a restraint ; is it of no good as an incitement and a reward for exertions ? Is not public opinion formed by such feelings ? and is it not a dark and demoralising system to draw this veil over human actions, to say to the mass, be base, and you will not be despised ; be virtuous, and you will not be honoured ? Is this the

way in which Mr. Grote would foster the spirit of a bold, and indomitable people? Was the liberty of that people established by fraud? Did America lie herself into independence? Was it treachery which enabled Holland to shake off the yoke of Spain? Is there any instance since the beginning of the world, where human liberty has been established by little systems of trumpery and trick? These are the weapons of monarchs against the people, not of the people against monarchs. With their own right hand, and with their mighty arm, have the people gotten to themselves the victory, and upon them may they ever depend; and then comes Mr. Grote, a scholar and a gentleman, and knowing all the histories of public courage, preaches cowardice and treachery to England; tells us that the bold cannot be free, and bids us seek for liberty by clothing ourselves in the mask of falsehood, and trampling on the cross of truth.*

If this shrinking from the performance of duties is to be tolerated, voters are not the only persons who

* Mr. Grote is a very worthy, honest, and able man; and, if the world were a chess-board, would be an important politician.

would recur to the accommodating convenience of ballot. A member of Parliament who votes against government can get nothing in the army, navy, or church, or at the bar, for his children or himself: they are placed on the north wall, and starved for their honesty. Judges, too, suffer for their unpopularity — Lord Kilwarden was murdered, Lord Mansfield burnt down; but voters, forgetting that they are only trustees for those who have no vote, require that they themselves should be virtuous with impunity, and that all the penalties of austerity and Cautonism should fall upon others. I am aware that it is of the greatest consequence to the constituent that he should be made acquainted with the conduct of his representative; but I maintain, that to know, without the fear of mistake, what the conduct of individuals has been in their fulfilment of the great trust of electing members of Parliament, is also of the greatest importance in the formation of public opinion; and that, when men acted in the dark, the power of distinguishing between the bad and the good would be at an end.

To institute ballot is to apply a very dangerous innovation to a temporary evil; for it is seldom,

but in very excited times, that these acts of power are complained of which the ballot is intended to remedy. There never was an instance in this country where parties were so nearly balanced; but all this will pass away, and, in a very few years, either Peel will swallow Lord John, or Lord John will pasture upon Peel; parties will coalesce, the Duke of Wellington and Viscount Melbourne meet at the same board, and the lion lie down with the lamb. In the mean time a serious and dangerous political change is resorted to for the cure of a temporary evil, and we may be cursed with ballot when we do not want it, and cannot get rid of it.

If there is ballot there can be no scrutiny, the controlling power of parliament is lost, and the members are entirely in the hands of returning officers.

An election is hard run — the returning officer lets in twenty votes which he ought to have excluded, and the opposite candidate is unjustly returned. I petition, and as the law now stands, the return would be amended, and I, who had the legitimate majority, should be seated in parliament. But how could

justice be done if the ballot obtained, and if the returning officer were careless or corrupt? Would you put all the electors upon their oath? Would it be advisable to accept any oath where detection was impossible, and could any approximation to truth be expected under such circumstances, from such an inquisition? It is true, the present committees of the House of Commons are a very unfair tribunal, but that tribunal may and will be amended, and bad as that tribunal is, nobody can be insane enough to propose that we are to take refuge in the blunders or the corruption of 600 returning officers, 100 of whom are Irish.

It is certainly in the power of a committee, when incapacity or villany of the returning officer has produced an unfair return, to annul the whole election, and to proceed again *de novo*; but how is this just? or what satisfaction is this to me, who have unquestionably a lawful majority, and who ask of the House of Commons to examine the votes, and to place in their house the man who has combined the greatest number of suffrages? The answer of the House of Commons is, "One of you is undoubtedly

the rightful member, but we have so framed our laws of election, that it is impossible to find out which that man is; the loss and penalties ought only to fall upon one, but they must fall upon both; we put the well-doer and the evil-doer precisely in the same situation, there shall be no election;" and this may happen ten times running.

Purity of election, the fair choice of representatives, must be guarded either by the coercing power of the House of Commons exercised upon petitions, or it must be guarded by the watchful jealousy of opposite parties at the registrations; but if (as the Radicals suppose) ballot gives a power of perfect concealment, whose interest is it to watch the registrations? If I despair of distinguishing my friends from my foes, why should I take any trouble about registrations? Why not leave every thing to that great *primum mobile* of all human affairs, the bar-rister of six years' standing?

The answer of the excellent Benthamites to all this is, "What you say may be true enough in the present state of registrations, but we have another

scheme of registration to which these objections will not apply." There is really no answering this Paulo post legislation. I reason now upon registration and reform which are in existence, which I have seen at work for several years. What new improvements are in the womb of time, or (if time has no womb) in the more capacious pockets of the followers of Bentham I know not: when I see them tried I will reason upon them. There is no end to these eternal changes; we have made an enormous revolution within the last ten years, — let us stop a little and secure it, and prevent it from being turned into ruin; I do not say the reform bill is final, but I want a little time for breathing; and if there are to be any more changes, let them be carried into execution hereafter by those little legislators who are now receiving every day after dinner a cake or a plum, in happy ignorance of Mr. Grote and his ballot. I long for the quiet times of *Log*, when all the English common people are making calico, and all the English gentlemen are making long and short verses, with no other interruption of their happiness than when false quantities are discovered in one or the other.

What is to become of petitions if ballot is established? Are they to be open as they now are, or are they to be conducted by ballot? Are the radical shopkeepers and the radical tenant to be exposed (as they say) to all the fury of incensed wealth and power, and is that protection to be denied to them in petitions, which is so loudly demanded in the choice of representatives? Are there to be two distinct methods of ascertaining the opinions of the people, and these completely opposed to each other? A member is chosen this week by a large majority of voters who vote in the dark, and the next week, when men vote in the light of day, some petition is carried totally opposite to all those principles for which the member with invisible votes was returned to Parliament. How, under such a system, can Parliament ever ascertain what the wishes of the people really are? The representatives are Radicals, the petitioners eminently conservative; the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

And if the same protection is adopted for petitions as is given in elections, and if both are conducted

by ballot, how are the House of Commons to deal with petitions? When it is intended particularly that a petition should attract the attention of the House of Commons, some member bears witness to the respectability or the futility of the signatures; and how is it possible, without some guides of this kind, that the house could form any idea of the value and importance of the petition?

These observations apply with equal force to the communications between the representative and the constituent. It is the Radical doctrine that a representative is to obey the instructions of his constituents. He has been elected under the ballot by a large majority; an open meeting is called, and he receives instructions in direct opposition to all those principles upon which he has been elected. Is this the real opinion of his constituents? and if he receives his instructions for a ballot meeting, who are his instructors? The lowest men in the town, or the wisest and the best? — But if ballot is established for elections only, and all communications between the constituents on one side, and Parliament

and the representatives on the other, are carried on in open meetings, then are there two publics according to the Radical doctrines, essentially different from each other: the one acting under the influence of the rich and powerful, the other free; and if all political petitions are to be carried on by ballot, how are Parliament to know who petitions, or the member to know who instructs?

I have hitherto spoken of ballot, as if it were, as the Radicals suppose it to be, a mean of secrecy; their very cardinal position is, that landlords, after the ballot is established, will give up in despair all hopes of commanding the votes of their tenants. I scarcely ever heard a more foolish, and gratuitous assumption. Given up? Why should they be given up? I can give many reasons why landlords should never exercise this unreasonable power, but I can give no possible reason why a man determined to do so should be baffled by the ballot. When two great parties in the empire are combating for the supreme power, does Mr. Grote imagine, that the men of woods, forests, and rivers, — that they who have the strength of the hills, — are to be baffled by bump-

kins thrusting a little pin into a little card in a little box? that England is to be governed by political acupuncture?

A landlord who would otherwise be guilty of the oppression will not change his purpose, because you attempt to outwit him by the invention of the ballot; he will become, on the contrary, doubly vigilant, inquisitive, and severe. "I am a professed Radical," said the tenant of a great duke to a friend of mine, "and the duke knows it; but if I vote for his candidates, he lets me talk as I please, live with whom I please, and does not care if I dine at a Radical dinner every day in the week. If there was a ballot, nothing could persuade the duke, or the duke's master, the steward, that I was not deceiving them, and I should lose my farm in a week." This is the real history of what would take place. The single lie on the hustings would not suffice; the concealed democrat who voted against his landlord, must talk with the wrong people, subscribe to the wrong club, huzza at the wrong dinner, break the wrong head, lead (if he wished to escape from the watchful jealousy of his landlord) a long life of lies between every election;

and he must do this, not only *eundo*, in his calm and prudential state, but *redeundo* from the market, warmed with beer and expanded by alcohol; and he must not only carry on his seven years of dissimulation before the world, but in the very bosom of his family, or he must expose himself to the dangerous garrulity of wife, children, and servants, from whose indiscretion every kind of evil report would be carried to the ears of the watchful steward. And when once the ballot is established, mere gentle, quiet lying will not do to hide the tenant who secretly votes against his landlord: the quiet passive liar will be suspected, and he will find, if he does not waive his bonnet and strain his throat in furtherance of his bad faith, that he has put in a false ball in the dark to very little purpose. I consider a long concealment of political opinion from the landlord to be nearly impossible for the tenant; and if you conceal from the landlord the only proof he can have of his tenant's sincerity, you are taking from the tenant the only means he has of living quietly upon his farm. You are increasing the jealousy and irascibility of the tyrant, and multiplying instead of lessening the number of his victims.

Not only you do not protect the tenant who wishes to deceive his landlord, by promising one way and voting another, but you expose all the other tenants who have no intention of deceiving, to all the evils of mistake and misrepresentation. The steward hates a tenant, and a rival wants his farm. They begin to whisper him out of favour, and to propagate rumours of his disaffection to the blue or the yellow cause ; as matters now stand he can refer to the poll-book, and show how he has voted. Under the ballot his security is gone, and he is exposed in common with his deceitful neighbour, to that suspicion from which none can be exempt when all vote in secret. If ballot then answered the purpose for which it was intended, the number of honest tenants whom it exposed to danger would be as great as the number of deceitful tenants whom it screened.

But if landlords could be prevented from influencing their tenants in voting, by threatening them with the loss of farms ; — if public opinion were too strong to allow of such threats, what would prevent a landlord from refusing to take, as a tenant, a man whose political opinion did not agree

with his own? what would prevent him from questioning, long before the election, and cross-examining his tenant, and demanding certificates of his behaviour and opinions, till he had, according to all human probability, found a man who felt as strongly as himself upon political subjects, and who would adhere to those opinions with as much firmness and tenacity? What would prevent, for instance, an orange landlord from filling his farms with orange tenants, and from cautiously rejecting every Catholic tenant who presented himself plough in hand? But if this practice were to obtain generally, of cautiously selecting tenants from their political opinion, what would become of the sevenfold shield of the ballot? Not only is the tenant not continued in the farm he already holds, but he finds, from the severe inquisition into which men of property are driven by the invention of ballot, that it is extremely difficult for a man, whose principles are opposed to those of his landlord, to get any farm at all.

The noise and jollity of a ballot mob must be such as the very devils would look on with delight. A set of deceitful wretches wearing the wrong colours,

abusing their friends, pelting the man for whom they voted, drinking their enemies' punch, knocking down persons with whom they entirely agreed, and roaring out eternal duration to principles they abhorred. A scene of wholesale bacchanalian fraud, a *posse comitatus* of liars, which would disgust any man with a free government, and make him sigh for the monarchy of Constantinople.

All the arguments which apply to suspected tenants, apply to suspected shopkeepers. Their condition under the ballot would be infinitely worse than under the present system; the veracious shopkeeper would be suspected, perhaps without having his vote to appeal to for his protection, and the shopkeeper who meant to deceive must prop up his fraud, by accommodating his whole life to the first deceit, or he would have told a disgraceful falsehood in vain. The political persecutors would not be baffled by the ballot: customers, who think they have a right to persecute tradesmen now, would do it then; the only difference would be that more would be persecuted then on suspicion, than are persecuted now from a full knowledge of every man's vote. Inquisitors would be

exasperated by this attempt of their victims to become invisible, and the search for delinquents would be more sharp and incessant.

A state of things may (to be sure) occur where the aristocratic part of the voters may be desirous, by concealing their votes, of protecting themselves from the fury of the multitude; but precisely the same objection obtains against ballot, whoever may be the oppressor or the oppressed. It is no defence; the single falsehood at the hustings will not suffice. Hypocrisy for seven years is impossible; the multitude will be just as jealous of preserving the power of intimidation, as aristocrats are of preserving the power of property, and will in the same way redouble their vicious activity from the attempt at destroying their empire by ballot.

Ballot could not prevent the disfranchisement of a great number of voters. The shopkeeper, harassed by men of both parties, equally consuming the articles in which he dealt, would seek security in not voting at all, and, of course, the ballot could not screen the disobedient tenant whom the land-

lord requested to stay away from the poll. Mr. Grote has no box for this ; but a remedy for securing the freedom of election, which has no power to prevent the voter from losing the exercise of his franchise altogether, can scarcely be considered as a remedy at all. There is a method, indeed, by which this might be remedied, if the great soul of Mr. Grote will stoop to adopt it. Why are the acts of concealment to be confined to putting in a ball? Why not vote in a domino, taking off the vizard to the returning officer only? or as tenant Jenkins or tenant Hodge might be detected by their stature, why not poll in sedan chairs with the curtains closely drawn, choosing the chairmen by ballot?

What a flood of deceit and villany comes in with ballot! I admit there are great moral faults under the present system. It is a serious violation of duty to vote for A. when you think B. the more worthy representative ; but the open voter, acting under the influence of his landlord, commits only this one fault, great as it is :—if he vote for his candidate, the landlord is satisfied, and asks no other sacrifice of truth and opinion ; but if the tenant votes against his land-

lord under the ballot, he is practising every day some fraud to conceal his first deviation from truth. The present method may produce a vicious act, but the ballot establishes a vicious habit; and then it is of some consequence, that the law should not range itself on the side of vice. In the open voting, the law leaves you fairly to choose between the dangers of giving an honest, or the convenience of giving a dishonest vote; but the ballot law opens a booth and asylum for fraud, calling upon all men to lie by beat of drum, forbidding open honesty, promising impunity for the most scandalous deceit, and encouraging men to take no other view of virtue than whether it pays or does not pay; for it must always be remembered and often repeated, and said and sung to Mr. Grote, that it is to the degraded liar only that the box will be useful. The man who performs what he promises needs no box. The man who refuses to do what he is asked to do despises the box. The liar, who says he will do what he never means to do, is the only man to whom the box is useful, and for whom this leaf out of the punic Pandects is to be inserted in our statute book; the other vices will begin to look up, and to think themselves

neglected, if falsehood obtains such flattering distinction, and is thus defended by the solemn enactments of law.

Old John Randolph, the American orator, was asked one day at a dinner party in London, whether the ballot prevailed in his state of Virginia, “ I scarcely believe,” he said, “ we have such a fool in all Virginia, as to mention even the vote by ballot, and I do not hesitate to say that the adoption of the ballot would make any nation a nation of scoundrels if it did not find them so.” John Randolph was right ; he felt that it was not necessary that a people should be false in order to be free ; universal hypocrisy would be the consequence of ballot : we should soon say on deliberation what David only asserted in his haste, *that all men were liars.*

Not only would the tenant under ballot be constantly exposed to the suspicions of the landlord, but the landlord would be exposed to the constant suspicions and the unjust misrepresentation of the tenant. Every tenant who was dismissed for a fair and just

cause, would presume he was suspected, would attribute his dismissal to political motives, and endeavour to make himself a martyr with the public ; and in this way violent hatred would be by the ballot disseminated among classes of men on whose agreement the order and happiness of England depends.

All objections to ballot which are important in England apply with much greater force to Ireland, a country of intense agitation, fierce passions, and quick movements. Then how would the ballot box of Mr. Grote harmonise with the confessional box of father O'Leary ?

I observe Lord John Russell, and some important men as well as him, saying, " We hate ballot, but if these practices continue, we shall be compelled to vote for it." What ! vote for it, if ballot is no remedy of these evils ? Vote for it, if ballot produces still greater evils than it cures ? That is (says the physician), if fevers increase in this alarming manner, I shall be compelled to make use of some medicine which will be of no use to fevers, and will at the same time bring on diseases of a much more serious

nature. I shall be under the absolute necessity of putting out your eyes, because I cannot prevent you from being lame. In fact, this sort of language is utterly unworthy of the sense, and courage of Lord John; he gives hopes where he ought to create absolute despair. This is that hovering between two principles which ruins political strength by lowering political character, and creates a notion that his enemies need not fear such a man, and that his friends cannot trust him. No opinion could be more unjust as applied to Lord John; but such an opinion will grow if he begins to value himself more upon his dexterity and finesse, than upon those fine manly historico-Russell qualities he most undoubtedly possesses. There are two beautiful words in the English language, — Yes and No; he must pronounce them boldly and emphatically; stick to Yes and No to the death; for Yes and No lay his head down upon the scaffold, where his ancestors have laid their heads before, and cling to his Yes and No in spite of Robert Peel and John Wilson, and Joseph, and Daniel, and Fergus, and Stevens himself. He must do as the Russells always have done, advance his

firm foot on the field of honour, plant it on the line marked out by justice, and determine in that cause to perish or to prevail.

In clubs, ballot preserves secrecy; but in clubs, after the barrister has blackballed the colonel, he most likely never hears of the colonel again: he does not live among people who are calling out for seven years *the colonel for ever*; nor is there any one who, thinking he has a right to the barrister's suffrage, exercises the most incessant vigilance to detect whether or not he has been defrauded of it. I do not say that ballot never can in any instance be made a mean of secrecy and safety, but that it cannot be so in popular elections. Even in elections, a consummate hypocrite who was unmarried, and drank water, might perhaps exercise his timid patriotism with impunity; but the instances would be so rare, as to render ballot utterly inefficient as a general protection against the abuses of power.

In America, ballot is nearly a dead letter; no protection is wanted: if the ballot protects any one

it is the master, not the man. Some of the states have no ballot, — some have exchanged the ballot for open voting.

Bribery carried on in any town now, would probably be carried on with equal success under the ballot. The attorney (if such a system prevailed) would say to the candidate, “There is my list of promises; if you come in I will have 5000*l.*, and if you do not, you shall pay me nothing.” To this list, to which I suppose all the venal rabble of the town to have put their names, there either is an opposition bribery list, or there is not: if there is not, the promisers, looking only to make money by their vote, have every inducement to keep their word. If there is an opposite list, the only trick which a promiser can play is to put down his name upon both lists: but this trick would be so easily detected, so much watched and suspected, and would even in the vote market render a man so infamous, that it never would be attempted to any great extent. At present, if a man promises his vote to A, and votes for B, because he can get more money by it, he does not become infamous among the bribed, because they lose no money by him; but

where a list is found, and a certain sum of money is to be divided among that list, every interloper lessens the receipts of all the rest; it becomes their interest to guard against fraudulent intrusion; and a man who put his name upon more lists than the votes he was entitled to give, would soon be hunted down by those he had robbed. Of course there would be no pay till after the election, and the man who having one vote had put himself down on two lists, or having two votes had put himself down on three lists, could hardly fail to be detected, and would of course lose his political aceldama. There must be honour among thieves; the mob regularly inured to bribery under the canopy of the ballot, would for their own sake soon introduce rules for the distribution of the plunder, and infuse, with their customary energy, the morality of not being sold more than once at every election.

If ballot were established, it would be received by the upper classes with the greatest possible suspicion, and every effort would be made to counteract it and to get rid of it. Against those attacks the inferior orders would naturally wish to strengthen themselves, and the obvious means would be by ex-

tending the number of voters ; and so comes on universal suffrage. The ballot would fail : it would be found neither to prevent intimidation nor bribery. Universal suffrage would cure both, as a teaspoonful of prussic acid is a certain cure for the most formidable diseases ; but universal suffrage would in all probability be the next step. “ The 200 richest voters of Bridport shall not beat the 400 poorest voters. Every body who has a house shall vote, or every body who is twenty-one shall vote, and then the people will be sure to have their way — we will blackball every member standing for Bridgewater who does not promise to vote for universal suffrage.”

The ballot and universal suffrage are never mentioned by the Radicals without being coupled together. Nobody ever thinks of separating them. Any person who attempted to separate them at torchlight or sunlight meetings would be hooted down. It is professedly avowed that ballot is only wanted for ulterior purposes, and no one makes a secret of what those ulterior purposes are : not only would the gift of ballot, if universal suffrage were refused, not be received with gratitude, but it would be received

with furious indignation and contempt, and universal suffrage be speedily extorted from you.

There would be this argument also for universal suffrage, to which I do not think it very easy to find an answer. The son of a man who rents a house of ten pounds a year is often a much cleverer man than his father; the wife more intelligent than the husband. Under the system of open voting these persons are not excluded from want of intellect, but for want of independence, for they would necessarily vote with their principal; but the moment the ballot is established, according to the reasoning of the Grote school, one man is as independent as another, because all are concealed, and so all are equally entitled to offer their suffrages. This cannot sow dissensions in families; for how, ballotically reasoning, can the father find it out? or, if he did find it out, how has any father, ballotically speaking, a right to control the votes of his family?

It is urged that the lower order of voters, proud of such a distinction, will not be anxious to extend it to others; but the lower order of voters will often

find that they possess this distinction in vain — that wealth and education are too strong for them ; and they will call in the multitude as auxiliaries, firmly believing that they can curb their inferiors and conquer their superiors. Ballot is a mere illusion, but universal suffrage is not an illusion. The common people will get nothing by the one, but they will gain every thing, and ruin every thing, by the last.

Some members of Parliament who mean to vote for ballot, in the fear of losing their seats, and who are desirous of reconciling to their conscience such an act of disloyalty to mankind, are fond of saying that ballot is harmless ; that it will neither do the good nor the evil that is expected from it ; and that the people may fairly be indulged in such an innocent piece of legislation. Never was there such folly and madness as this : ballot will be the cause of interminable hatred and jealousy among the different orders of mankind ; it will familiarise the English people to a long tenor of deceit ; it will not answer its purpose of protecting the independent voter, and the people, exasperated and disappointed by the failure, will indemnify themselves by insisting upon

unlimited suffrage. And then it is talked of as an experiment, as if men were talking of acids and alkalies, and the galvanic pile; as if Lord John could get on the hustings, and say, "Gentlemen, you see this ballot does not answer; do me the favour to give it up, and to allow yourselves to be replaced in the same situation as the ballot found you." Such, no doubt, is the history of nations and the march of human affairs; and, in this way, the error of a sudden and foolish largess of power to the people, might, no doubt, be easily retrieved. The most unpleasant of all bodily feelings is a cold sweat: nothing brings it on so surely as perilous nonsense in politics. I lose all warmth from the bodily frame when I hear the ballot talked of as an *experiment*.

If the ballot did succeed in enabling the lower order of voters to conquer their betters, so much the worse. In a town consisting of 700 voters, the 300 most opulent and powerful (and therefore probably the best instructed) would make a much better choice than the remaining 400; and the ballot would, in that case, do more harm than good. In nineteen cases out of twenty, the most numerous

party would be in the wrong. If this is the case, why give the franchise to all ; why not confine it to the first division ? *because even with all the abuses which occur, and in spite of them, the great mass of the people are much more satisfied with having a vote occasionally controlled, than with having none.* Many agree with their superiors, and therefore feel no control. Many are persuaded by their superiors, and not controlled. Some are indifferent which way they exercise the power, though they would not like to be utterly deprived of it. Some guzzle away their vote, some sell it, some brave their superiors, a few are threatened and controlled. The election, in different ways, is affected by the superior influence of the upper orders ; and the great mass (occasionally and justly complaining) are, beyond all doubt, better pleased than if they had no votes at all. The lower orders always have it in their power to rebel against their superiors ; and occasionally they will do so, and have done so, and occasionally and justly carried elections * against gold, and birth, and edu-

* The 400 or 500 voting against the 200 are right about as often as juries are right in differing from judges ; and that is very seldom.

cation. But it is madness to make laws of society which attempt to shake off the great laws of nature. As long as men love bread, and mutton, and broad cloth, wealth, in a long series of years, must have enormous effects upon human affairs, and the strong box will beat the ballot box. Mr. Grote has both, but he miscalculates their respective powers. Mr. Grote knows the relative values of gold and silver ; but by what moral rate of exchange is he able to tell us the relative values of liberty and truth ?

It is hardly necessary to say anything about universal suffrage, as there is no act of folly or madness which it may not in the beginning produce. There would be the greatest risk that the monarchy, as at present constituted, the funded debt, the established church, titles, and hereditary peerage, would give way before it. Many really honest men may wish for these changes ; I know, or at least believe, that wheat and barley would grow if there was no Archbishop of Canterbury, and domestic fowls would breed if our Viscount Melbourne was again called Mr. Lamb ; but they have stronger nerves than I have who would venture to bring these changes about.

So few nations have been free, it is so difficult to guard freedom from kings, and mobs, and patriotic gentlemen ; and we are in such a very tolerable state of happiness in England, that I think such changes would be very rash ; and I have an utter mistrust in the sagacity and penetration of political reasoners who pretend to foresee all the consequences to which they would give birth. When I speak of the tolerable state of happiness in which we live in England, I do not speak merely of nobles, squires, and canons of St. Paul's, but of drivers of coaches, clerks in offices, carpenters, blacksmiths, butchers, and bakers, and most men who do not marry upon nothing, and become burthened with large families before they have arrived at years of maturity. The earth is not sufficiently fertile for this :

Difficilem victum fundit durissima tellus.

After all, the great art in politics and war is to choose a good position for making a stand. The Duke of Wellington examined and fortified the lines of Torres Vedras a year before he had any occasion to make use of them, and he had previously marked out Waterloo as the probable scene of some future

exploit. The people seem to be hurrying on through all the well known steps to anarchy ; they must be stopped at some pass or another : the first is the best and the most easily defended. The people have a right to ballot or to any thing else which will make them happy ; and they have a right to nothing which will make them unhappy. They are the best judges of their immediate gratifications, and the worst judges of what would best conduce to their interests for a series of years. Most earnestly and conscientiously wishing their good, I say,

NO BALLOT.

THE END.

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